

West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

# Union Messenger

## "A Union of Professionals"

### WSTU November Calendar

11/5-6 -IFT ULI - Westmont  
 11/14 -571 EB Mtg.-Westmont - 5:30 p.m.  
 11/14 -571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.  
 11/15 -Deadline for filing 990N forms to IRS  
 (Councils that closed books in June)  
 11/23 -TRS Seminar Reservation Deadline  
 11/30 -571 TRS Seminar - Westmont

### Union Messenger

Jane Russell, President  
 Alice Kautsky, Vice President  
 Sandra Erickson, Treasurer  
 Cathleen Pope, Secretary  
 Jonathan Pazol, Financial Secretary  
 Ed Hohman, Legal Defense  
 Secretary & COPE Chairperson  
 Tom Smith,  
 IFT Field Service Director  
 Arnavaz Mistry-Mujthaba,  
 IFT Field Service Director  
 Judy Jennings, Office Manager  
 Julie Masterton, Office Secretary  
 Andrew Bendelow,  
 571 Web Administrator  
 Angel Holmes,  
 571 Union Messenger Editor



## Building Representatives are Leaders

by Jane Russell

The responsibility of Building Representatives is to lead the union members in their building. While not expected to know all the answers, there is an expectation that Building Representatives know where to get the answers or to whom to refer members to get the answers to their questions. The annual Building Representative Workshop provides union stewards with the tools needed to guide their building members.



IFT Field Service Directors Tom Smith and Arnavaz Mistry-Mujthaba, reminded those present in Westmont on September 29, 2011, that "You are the key to the union's success." About 65 WSTU Building Representatives from most Local 571 councils, enjoyed dinner and then listened carefully to the presentation. Mistry-Mujthaba and Smith described the role of the building representative to the union, its members, the school district board and administration, the community as well as local, state, and federal politics. Topics covered included the duty of fair representation, grievance handling, DCFS mandated reporting, contract negotia-

tions, and working with members and school district administration. One building steward explained that she had not participated in union work at her school for several years and saw how critically important her new building representative role is to the members. She went on to say this workshop was an excellent "refresher" that would better help her to do her union work. The presenters also answered a myriad of questions from participants.

The workshop concluded with the annual 571 Officers COPE "split-the-pot" raffle. One lucky building representative walked away with a check for \$100.

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## Is This the New Reality?

Last Saturday, an ideal fall morning, I was walking in a nice suburban neighborhood not far from O'Hare airport. When I give up a Saturday morning to voluntarily collect signatures for an incumbent Illinois senator to be put on the ballot, you know I believe in him and the work he does in the legislature on behalf of all of us. Along with my union brother, a sheet metal worker, and with lists in hand, we mapped out how we would best cover the neighborhoods to request signatures for our candidate.

The voter sheets provided for the campaign, designated in most cases the party to which the homeowner was affiliated or at least how they voted in the last several primary elections. At the very first house where I knocked on the door, I ended up scaring the woman for which I apologized. She wouldn't sign the petition because she only voted for candidates in "the other party".

During the sun-filled trek, we found most persons not at home. You would expect people to be running their weekend errands, attending their children's many sporting events, or out enjoying the lovely fall weather. For those that were at home, the reception we received was not always friendly. In fact, although not rude to me, some expressed their anger with current legislators, whoever they were.

One particularly large man opened the front door to his home when I requested his signature for the candidate. "Well, I only vote \_\_\_\_\_. And you know that bum senator from DuPage County; he got all of his money from big oil companies".

(I was able to determine the man was discussing Senator Dick Durbin who is from Springfield. I've been at the senator's nice home, which is not a palatial estate. I don't think his money came from investing in big oil companies, either.) Although I didn't feel afraid at that point, there was fire in this registered voter's eyes. I later found out that my union brother who was on the other side of the street, stopped in his tracks and looked over me to see who was doing the hollering. I guess my partner was getting ready to intervene if it appeared I would need help, but that was not the case. The registered voter wasn't angry with me, just his own reality and whatever his perceived "facts" were about legislators.

Occasionally, we found people willing to step forward and sign the petition sheet, offering a kind word about the candidate,

*"I wouldn't vote for any of them; they all smell."*

although these people were few and far between. We also found in our rather unscientific survey that most neighborhood people we spoke to did not recognize the name of their Illinois Senator who has been in office for the past six years!

At one of the final homes on the list, a young girl answered the door before her grandmother appeared. When I requested the signature for the candidate, the grandmother's response was, "I wouldn't vote for any of them; they all smell." In years past when I have collected signa-

tures, I noticed that most people were cheerful and signed to put the candidate on the ballot, allowing those interested to run for a political office. Sure I encountered a couple of in your face, one-issue voters, but only a couple who wouldn't sign their name on the petition if the candidate wasn't in favor of their one issue. Most people however, were really pleasant and appeared happy to be involved in our democracy.

So is what I experienced last Saturday morning the new reality? Are we all generally so upset with our legislators, both state and federal, that common sense has left us? Is our new attitude, "I don't know and I don't care?"

"Even if I find out something about the candidate (true facts or not), do I bother to vote?"

I would like to thank my union brother, the sheet metal worker who is currently on medical leave and out of work, for "watching my back" while we gathered signatures. Will I volunteer on a Saturday morning again to help the candidate of my choice? Yes I will. Isn't trying to make the democratic process work to the best of our ability better than just pontificating about how bad it supposedly is? Yes, we can make democracy work. We must stay involved. And we must work together. That's our reality.

In unity,

*Jane A. Russell*

Local 571 President



## Website of the Month

*National Geographic-inspiring people to care about the planet since 1888*

The site is being refurbished, although it would be hard to improve. Take a moment and review the volume of information available. The "Daily News" and "Picture of the Day" are excellent features. As is known around the world, the photography is superb. Topics include animals, environment, travel, adventures, and more. Great lesson plans for students of all ages can be accessed for free. Resources are available for teachers, informal educators, families, students, and children. Comments are being sought to continuously improve the website. <http://education.nationalgeographic.com>

# The Common Core State Standards in Mathematics

by Bonnie Saracco

The 2011 AFT Teach Conference in Washington D.C. presented an overview of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Mathematics which, like their counterpart CCSS in English language arts (ELA), are a great improvement over the current disorganized array of state standards. Both AFT and IFT participated in the production of, and wholly endorse, the new standards.

As is also true for the new ELA standards, ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) has directed that the transition to the CCSS mathematics standards be in process now. The new Illinois assessment system based on the CCSS will be in place in 2014-15.

The new Illinois K-12 state standards in mathematics are organized into domains, clusters, and standards. Domains are the overarching ideas, such as number operations in base ten. Clusters outline the progression by grade level, such as understanding place value to perform algorithms. Standards tell what a student should be able to do at each grade level, such as using place value understanding to round to the nearest 100.

The CCSS in mathematics, like those in high-performing countries, stress depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. They address the “mile wide, inch deep” nature of current state standards.

The K-5 standards delay instruction in various topics to focus on a solid foundation in number operations, allowing students to move into more demanding concepts and applications later. They are based on the best of the current state standards, and help teachers guide students through fractions, negative numbers, and geometry with a careful progression by specific grade

level.

While fewer, these standards require deeper understanding. For example, instead of just applying the “invert and multiply” algorithm to divide fractions, students will be expected to understand why the algorithm works.

Building on the K-5 curriculum, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will do increased hands-on learning in geometry, algebra, and probability and statistics, preparing them well for algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The high school standards prepare students to use mathematical thinking to solve real world problems. They emphasize mathematical modeling and the ability to choose among mathematical and statistical methods and technologies.

To meet this challenge, mathematics materials and instruction will need to be redesigned and aligned, using different pacing. Racing to cover large numbers of objectives will be replaced by allowing much more time to produce proficiency of certain key topics. Also, some topics will be moved to different grade levels for a better match with cognitive development. Teachers and parents will now be able to know what knowledge students are to attain each specific year.

The AFT Ad Hoc Committee on Standards Rollout has recommended a shift in culture away from excessive testing to a joint effort to develop an organized system of supports to meet this formidable challenge. The AFT, Common Core State Standards Initiative, ISBE, and PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) websites offer a wealth of information and support for this process.



IFT President Dan Montgomery reported to members of the 571 Retiree Council at their new member luncheon on September 13.

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WSTU President Jane Russell (second from the left) takes oath of office with other officers as the newly elected secretary of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. Russell represents the Illinois Federation of Teachers as a sustaining member of the IARA.

## What Workers Need to Know

by Jane Russell

The 2011 reforms to the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act, PA97-0018, effective June 28, 2011, were presented and discussed at the WSTU House of Representatives meeting on September 19, 2011. David Menchetti and Charles Haskins, leading Workers' Compensation attorneys, defined and reviewed how a claim may be filed for an injury on the job. Workers' Compensation benefits were clarified as far as changes in the law regarding employee choice of medical providers. For districts with a Preferred Provider Program, significant changes have occurred. Reforms with medical treatment, temporary disability, and permanent disability were detailed. The attorneys' message was clear: educate your members. Further information can be obtained from your council's 571 House of Representatives delegates or from the Chicago firm's website, [www.chnm-law.com](http://www.chnm-law.com).



Dave Menchetti, left, and Chuck Haskins, right, reviewed employee rights under the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act. Also pictured, center, is George Cullen from the firm, Cullen, Haskins, Nicholson and Menchetti P.C.

## Retirement: the light at the end of the tunnel...

# The Illinois Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Seminar



**WHEN:**

Wednesday, November 30, 2011, 5:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

**FOR WHOM:**

Local 571 members close to retirement will have priority.

**WHAT:**

Light dinner followed by a presentation by a representative of the Illinois Teachers Retirement System.

**WHERE:**

Robert M. Healey Conference Center, 500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont, Illinois 60559.

**R.S.V.P.:** If you plan to attend, contact Judy Jennings by November 23 at 630/468-4098 or [jjennings@ift-aft.org](mailto:jjennings@ift-aft.org).

**Seating is limited, so call today!**

*Sponsored by the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571*

### What's Missing from the Messenger?



E-mail your thoughts to Angel Holmes at [angelholmes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:angelholmes@sbcglobal.net)



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# 2011-2012 Scholarship Opportunities for Local 571 Union Members and/or their Children or Legal Dependents



- **AFT (American Federation of Teachers) Robert G. Porter Scholars Program**

- ◇ Four-year, \$8,000 post-secondary **scholarship** (\$2,000 per year) to students who are dependents of AFT members
- ◇ One-time \$1,000 **grant** to AFT members to assist with their continuing education

2011-2012 applications are available in November 2011 on the AFT website at [www.aft.org/benefits/scholarships.cfm](http://www.aft.org/benefits/scholarships.cfm); or by e-mailing [porterscholars@aft.org](mailto:porterscholars@aft.org); or by mailing a post card to: Porter Scholars; 555 New Jersey Ave., NW; Washington, DC 20001 (requests must specify whether applicants are seeking the one-time grant for AFT members or the scholarship for their child)

- **AFT Union Plus Scholarship Program** - \$500 to \$4,000 one-time cash award for undergraduate study beginning in the fall of 2011 - open to AFT members, spouses, and dependent children. Apply online at <http://www.unionplus.org/college-education-financing/union-plus-scholarship>. **Applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2012.**

- **IFT (Illinois Federation of Teachers) Scholarships** - applications available now. Applications must be received in the IFT office before 5:00 p.m., Monday, December 3, 2011. For an application, go to [www.ift-aft.org/benefits/scholarships.aspx](http://www.ift-aft.org/benefits/scholarships.aspx).

- ◇ **IFT Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship** - one-time award in the amount of \$1,000 - open to children of currently employed active members in good standing or deceased members who were in good standing at the time of death - children must be high school seniors who will graduate in 2012 - children must presently be enrolled in a special education school, class, or program - not open to students who plan to teach in special education
- ◇ **IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship** - \$6,000 award (\$1,500 each year for four years) provided student is enrolled full-time at an Illinois public university and maintains a "C" cumulative average - open to children of currently employed active members in good standing or deceased members who were in good standing at time of death - applicants must be high school seniors with a cumulative "B" average

- **West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, Mary Wheeler Scholarship Award** - six \$1,700 one-time awards - open to high school seniors graduating in 2012 and whose parents or guardians are members in good standing of Local 571. Applicants must plan to continue their education in the fall of 2012. Applications available at [www.wstu571.org](http://www.wstu571.org), or call 630-468-4098. **All application materials must be postmarked on or before March 1, 2012.**
- **West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, Jo Ann Horowitz Scholarship Award** - One \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded in 2012 by the West Suburban Teachers Union to a current undergraduate college/university student pursuing a career in teaching or in Women's Studies. Eligible recipients include any member in good standing, or the child/grandchild of a member in good standing of the WSTU, Local 571. Applications available at [www.wstu571.org](http://www.wstu571.org), or call 630-468-4098. **All application materials must be postmarked on or before March 1, 2012.**
- **CFL (Chicago Federation of Labor) William A. Lee Scholarship Program** - ten (10) \$2,000 one-time cash awards, five random drawing, five academic - open to high school seniors who will graduate in 2012 from Chicago-area high schools whose parents are union members in good standing - send **written** request for application form to William A. Lee Scholarship Committee after January 1; Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; 130 E. Randolph St., Suite 2600; Chicago, IL 60601 (When writing for the application, indicate whether you want to participate in the academic competition or the random drawing.) **After January 1, you may also obtain the application online at [www.chicagolabor.org](http://www.chicagolabor.org). Application deadline is March 1, 2012. Please note: On the application form, the Union Affiliation is the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT/AFT.**
- **Thomas H. Reece Scholarship** - a one-time scholarship of up to \$2,000 will be awarded each year to a CTU/IFT member or his/her child who is currently enrolled in a public university with a declared education major or enrolled in a Master of Education program. **Information will be available on the IFT website ([www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org)) when application is available.** Please check the website frequently.
- **Loan Forgiveness Programs** - Visit <http://www.aft.org/yourwork/tools4teachers/fundingdatabase/index.cfm> for information.



## West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571

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